

Wycombe's frightener —by Cooke

THERE will be 15,000 fans packed into Loakes Park, Wycombe, next Saturday, when First Division Middlesbrough are the visitors in the third round of the FA Cup.

How will the notorious Wycombe slope—an 11 foot drop from stand to stand—affect Jackie Charlton's team? Will class combat the slope and the would-be giant-killers?

Charlie Cooke, Chelsea's Scottish international forward, made the 30-mile trip into Buckinghamshire to assess the slope and Middlesbrough's chances.

SURPRISED

"Better Middlesbrough than Chelsea," was his immediate summary as he looked at the pitch from the player's tunnel.

Cooke went on:

• It's one hell of a slope.

There's no problem with corner kicks at the top end... I reckon Charlie Cooke would get 20 goals a year with his head down the slope.

Middlesbrough won't be able to complain about the surface. It seems quite a big field.

But I must admit I was surprised when I first saw the slope. It's a fair drop from one side to the other—more than the height of a goalpost.

The players will get a bit of a fright when they walk out. It feels strange.

If Middlesbrough are feeling

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sorry for themselves because they are playing away and against an amateur side from outside the League, the sight of the slope could hit them.

If they concede an early goal they could feel worse and be in trouble.

It will be interesting to see if Jackie Charlton and his team take courage in both hands and go for a result. I've rarely seen a slope like that in football—even schoolboy soccer.

My advice to a professional side faced with the Wycombe slope would be to play it cautiously.

I've got to fancy Middlesbrough to win no matter what, although they'll have a few little frights on the way.

I think it will be most difficult for the Middlesbrough defenders, especially the goalkeeper, in intercepting crosses.

WATCH IT!

And shots along the ground downhill will want watching.

Middlesbrough will have to make simple adjustments, such as striking uphill passes that much firmer.

I'd heard about the Wycombe slope and I am sure the Middlesbrough players have had it drummed into them.

But seeing is believing and I reckon there will be a few surprised players when they get their first look at the pitch.

CHARLIE COOKE and the Wycombe slope where Middlesbrough face a tough Cup battle.

